

Charges Due in Baby's Death

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Prosecutors intend to file a homicide charge Friday in the death of a 13-month old Toppenish boy, one of three severe child-abuse cases that hit the Yakima Valley last week.

Mac Miller died Friday in the Toppenish home of his grandmother and her boyfriend. Reported as a drowning, medical evidence points to something else, authorities said.

Boyfriend Lupe Rivas, 38, who was arrested Tuesday, had bail set at \$100,000 Wednesday in Yakima County Superior Court. He is being held on suspicion of homicide.

Yakima County sheriff's deputies on Wednesday were still looking for the grandmother, Annette Washines, 42. Detective Lt. Dan Garcia said a warrant has been issued for her arrest as well.

Garcia said preliminary autopsy results showed that a probable blow to Mac's head induced a subdural hematoma, a condition in which blood collects between the membranes covering the brain. The condition often kills quickly as pressure builds and causes brain damage.

That's what likely happened in this case, Garcia said, and court papers filed Wednesday point to Washines and Rivas as the alleged abusers.

When an ambulance arrived at the Toppenish home Friday, Mac had already stopped breathing, according to court papers. Before he was taken by helicopter to Seattle's Harborview Medical Center, a doctor at Providence Toppenish Hospital also collected evidence of possible abuse.

Sheriff's investigators wait today for an expected final report from the King County Medical Examiner's office on the death. Then they'll ask for advice from a Seattle medical expert in child-abuse cases, Garcia said.

The only other missing piece in the case is Washines, who is being treated with equal weight to Rivas as a suspect, Garcia said.

"Our worst fear is that she's back in Montana, but we think she's still in the area," Garcia said. The family is linked to the Salish-Kootenai tribe of Montana.

Meanwhile, Yakima Police Department investigators have met partial success in investigating last week's other two abuse cases, one of them focusing on the death of a 10-month-old baby and the other on the severe abuse of a 2-year-old.

Police were still looking Wednesday for 20-year-old Jason Mejia, also known as Jason Bravo, who lived with the 16-year-old mother of baby Christian Gonzales.

Though he showed up at the Yakima hospital when Christian was brought in, Mejia left before police could question him in the suspicious death, said Sgt. Mike Merryman of the city detective division.

"We want to talk to him on this case," Merryman said. "It'd be nice if he could come to us rather than us having to find him."

Mejia, who is not the baby's father, and his girlfriend were alone at their Yakima home with Christian when the baby stopped breathing, police said. An initial coroner's investigation found evidence of severe beating -- including bruises, bite marks and possible asphyxiation.

The third abuse case, which hospitalized 2-year-old Gage Kelso with burns and injuries from a beating, resulted in a first-degree assault charge against his 27-year-old mother Tuesday.

Roxanne Dunn sits now in the Yakima County jail awaiting trial.